

The Persistence of Type

Citation for published version:

Jardine, FA, Dyer, S & Redmond, M, *The Persistence of Type*, 2015, Exhibition.
<<http://wearepanel.co.uk/index.php?page=the-persistence-of-type-2>>

Link:

[Link to publication record in Heriot-Watt Research Portal](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Heriot-Watt Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

Heriot-Watt University has made every reasonable effort to ensure that the content in Heriot-Watt Research Portal complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact open.access@hw.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

THE PERSISTENCE OF TYPE

Panel Presents

Fiona Jardine
Sophie Dyer
Maeve Redmond

CALEDONIAN GIRLS: A PICTURESQUE

by FIONA JARDINE

In 2013, Catriona and Lucy invited Sophie and Maeve to respond visually to photographs they had found in the archives of Barrie Knitwear whilst researching another project. They invited Fiona to write a text to accompany them. An exhibition, *Barrie Girls*, and illustrated publication, *C'est ci n'est pas un foto*, were produced.

It is obvious what is wrong with this passage. Cut free from surnames and designations, the professional standing of Panel (Duffy and McEachan), Dyer, Redmond and Jardine – the curators, designers and artist involved – is subsumed. Without the required degree of specificity, we are infantilised, too immediate and too intimate.

The Persistence of Type connects selected graphic motifs, archive images and typographic styles with the strategic individualisation and pseudo-personalisation of women in advertising and in jobs associated with the advance of affective labour in late capitalism. Affective labour is phatic, involving social tasks linked with caring and an individual's ambient embodiment of corporate values. When the idea of type as font is conflated with that of type as an affective or aesthetic standard, in some respects, the function of women in certain advertising campaigns for certain industries can be seen to parallel the use of fonts retaining a sense of their derivation from handwriting. This notion of type also suggests ways in which the female body might be shaped as a letterform and made to behave as a glyph, or become subject to alphabetic grading, as with bra cup sizes.

Let us explain the evolution of this position.

The photographs used in the *Barrie Girls* exhibition were taken in the 1950s and 60s. They featured models posing in a range of knitwear. Some, obviously amateur shots, appear to have been taken in the Barrie offices of, we fancy, typists or linkers – a 'girl-next-door', a mundane ideal. Writing about Tess of the d'Urbervilles, James (Krasner – an academic in the US, we want him to be readily identifiable) observes that Tess is 'one of a long row only'.¹ She is introduced in a group of self-similar others at a May Day fete, an interchangeable maiden in full, springtime bloom; a fungible commodity. According to Krasner, Tess is singled out as the best of the bunch, a good, serviceable specimen. It is the quality of accessible perfection that typifies the value of the girl-next-door, not a pained attraction to unattainable beauty.

For our *Barrie Girls* project, we imagined that the dream job of our amateur model would be 'airhostess'. *Weave Me A Rainbow*, a prizewinning film produced for the National Association of Scottish Woollen Manufacturers in 1962, a date contemporaneous with the photographs we used, closes with a cast of international pilots and airhostesses flying into Edinburgh from Brazil, Japan and Italy, '...collecting Capitals as the rest of us collect stamps. The jet-set. With 24 hours leave. One day in another country...' The implication, as the airhostesses unbutton in a countryside hotel, is that 'another country' is also 'another morality', one that leaves wives behind: 'There's just 24 hours to play with. But where? And how? For the co-pilot from New York? And the Captain from Beruit? Will the boy from Yokohama want to see what a Brazilian has eyes for? And what does a Roman do, when she's not in Rome?'

This passage in *Weave Me A Rainbow* reflects the general tenor of airline advertising at a time when air travel was becoming *de rigueur* for businessmen. Trading on innuendo and come hither images, airline adverts are notorious for blatantly suggesting that airhostesses are available for more than safety demonstrations and serving drinks.

The controversial *Fly Me* campaign launched by National Airlines in the early 1970s ran as a series of invitations from Cheryl, Jo, Linda, Margie and friends: 'You think I'm just another pretty face? I'm not. I'm a fresh attitude towards air travel. A bright look on the outside, a personal way of thinking on the inside.' In the same period, American Airlines used a model to evoke Mrs Robinson: 'Think of her as your mother.' (Ludicrous when you realise that the company considered airhostesses too old to work at 32). The robustly sexist Southwest Airlines extorted passengers to 'Mix Business with Pleasure... Good times. Free drinks on weekday flights... No better Airline for Love nor Money.'

Scotland's self-declared 'International Airline', British Caledonian Airways, operated its marketing on the same principles, ('She goes further than you think'). In 1983, riffing on a Beach Boys classic, men in suits wish they all could be 'Caledonian Girls...the cutest girls in the world'. Despite the end-of-the-pier sensibility, (the men come across as inept, overgrown schoolboys), the range of clichés was breathtaking even then: Far Eastern girls 'do splendid things with rice', German girls are strict but

will 'keep the bachelors warm at night'. Of course, in the 1980s, Miss World, (originating as a populist spin-off from the 1951 Festival of Britain, no less), was still a fixture on British TV. >

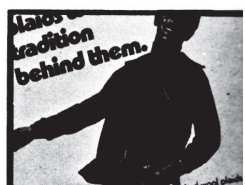
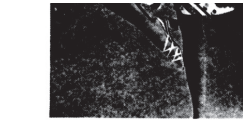
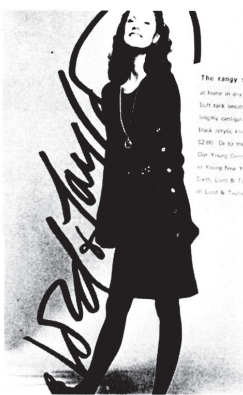
Kathleen Barry, remarks on the lure of glamour as part of the airlines' appeal to female recruits.² When you are wearing a mini-dress by Quant, aisles and airports become catwalks and podiums. In 1965, Braniff International Airways commissioned Emilio Pucci to design distinctive, colourful dresses, advertising them with an 'Air Strip': 'During service, the stewardesses would take something off to reveal a different layer and a different look underneath. They might be wearing a skirt and remove it to show off their hot pants beneath.'³

Barry considers the kind of 'glamour' represented by high-fashion styling to have a particular role in separating consumption from production. Meniscus-like boundaries also separate 'editorial' from 'catalogue' and 'glamour' in the modelling industry, reiterating a class-based taxonomy. Its evident in the differing looks and behaviours associated with the standing of airlines as either legacy or budget. Nonetheless, whether by scheduled smiling or charted laughter, the efficient, accommodating airhostess had to look like she was enjoying herself, not working: 'In airline passenger service, we can... see glamour at work in rendering labour invisible...glamour meant concealing labour even as it was being performed.'⁴

Pertinently, Barry credits first use

of the word 'glamour' to Sir Walter Scott in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Scott was largely responsible for catalysing Scotland's claim to tartan in the 19th century and establishing the Highlands as a destination for Victorian tourists. Playing to the national stereotype that emerged fully kilted and red-haired thereafter, British Caledonian, who maintained a pipe band, used a range of tartans woven in Scotland by the textile industry promoted in *Weave Me A Rainbow*. Manufacturers sought to benefit from close links between Scotland's national identity and their products: tweeds, tartans, sporting garb.

Post-War, airlines trained a keen eye on the expanding market for tourism as increased time for recreation and higher levels of disposable income bolstered an interest in travelling to destinations made more accessible by air. British Caledonian secured a lucrative scheduled presence in



North America in 1976. On the runway, the Caledonian Girl was perhaps the first encounter with 'real' Scotland for a diasporic traveller boarding in Los Angeles or New York. A corporate ornament conveying a generic sense of Scottishness – a human picturesque – she had something in common with the postcard views of heathery mountains and misty lochs fixed in the American psyche by Brigadoon.

The potent triangulation between women, landscape and leisure is reflected in the evolution of the Tennent's 'Lager Lovely', who appeared as 'Ann' in 1962. Tennent's innovative pictorial series of cans featured pipe bands, 'Housewives Choice' recipes, Scottish and English landmarks throughout the 1950s. Ann was anonymous as a 'Young Woman in Trafalgar Square' before she replaced the scenes of Edinburgh Castle, Ben Nevis and the Kyles of Bute entirely. On a range of 13 cans, she was seen 'Boating on Loch Lomond', 'Shopping on Sauchiehall Street' and so on. She flirted through 'An evening at home' and 'At the Pool', spending 'Ann's Day' as a 'Photographer's model', 'Modelling beachwear' in the morning and 'Posing for a holiday brochure' in the afternoon. In the third and final 'Ann' series – 'Ann On Vacation' – she was a 'Bathing Towel Beauty', a 'Lady in Red', a 'Lady in Black', an 'Umbrella Girl'.

Such was the success of the mild titillation offered by Ann, that Tennent's introduced Angela, Pat, Linda, Susan and Vicky, who ushered in a parade of bouffant and oiled young women throughout the 1970s and 80s. Like the amateur models in our Barrie photographs and National Airline's Jo and Cheryl, they were girls-next-door: fantastic but just maybe possible. Reflecting on the phenomenon in 1984, Charles Schofield and Anthony Kamm noted:

'Today's Lager Lovelies are, wherever possible, local, Scottish Girls, on the books of a leading Glasgow model-agency. The 'girl-next-door' image is back too! The agency submits a sheet of single-shots of up to forty girls. From these a panel of Tennent's staff selects about ten, who are then interviewed by one of the managers – for the chosen girls will need not just to pose with customers and undertake photo-calls... but also to meet people and talk to them informally'.⁵ A final selection was made after this lengthy audition process. Needless to say, the casting photographs are more explicit that anything that ever appeared on a can.

Pliant and glamorous, yet thoroughly domesticated, the Lager Lovely presented what a tired working man could imagine was the 'off-duty' face of the woman serving him (in his home, behind the bar, on his flight, in his dreams). Tennent's branding helped entrench their success as the brew-

er of Scotland's favourite lager, but more than this, the Lovelies took on a mantle of their own. When (like airhostesses) they were collectively retired before their 30th birthday in 1991, their place was taken by a homesick yuppie who quits the London rat race to return to Edinburgh and a pint with his mates. To be fair, in a sibling advert, 'Susie' and a group of Lovelies are women dressed for white-collar careers, immune to the advances of 'Luigi', an amorous waiter. >

The yuppie strapline – 'I've GoT Mine' – plays with Tennent's iconic red 'T'. An emboldened, straight-edged capital, it has had a place on the brewery's labels since 1885. Instantly recognisable, it has become shorthand for Tennent's portfolio of sponsored events as well as the lager itself. When Ann was introduced, Tennent's contrasted the heavy, square serifs of the brand identity with the soft, calligraphic italics of her name. Ann wanted to strike up a personal relationship with you and her feminine touch was muted into a decorative quasi-handwritten slant. Tobias Frere-Jones describes the task of choosing an appropriate font to use in conjunction with a new range of cosmetics as one of determining the 'threshold at which a neutral form begins to resonate at a feminine frequency'.⁶ He surveyed font use by five well-known cosmetic brands, discovering to his surprise that a version of Optima was used by all of them: 'What is so feminine about Optima? ...Herman Zapf was hardly thinking of mascaras and nail polishes.'

Frere-Jones's use of 'hardly' is telling. Tacitly, he suggests that the construction of a new font is a quintessentially male pursuit (it is actually architecture or engineering), and his perception of 'a feminine frequency'

is similarly compromised. Arguably, it is more important to employ a classic, clean font to attach a mainstream, mid-price make-up range to notions of sophistication, natural enhancement and hygiene than to find one expressing an 'undulation of curves and various weights... [which] can carry the implications of delicacy or voluptuousness'.

There are typographic styles tackling the erotics of letterform head-on. Michael Worthington, designer of the 'Dominatrix' font in 1994, built a collection of lettering appearing in newspaper classifieds, phone-box calling cards, condom packets – 'the handlettered and neon vernacular of sex-shop windows and ship joints'. He traces the evolution of overtly sexual fonts like VAG rounded, Modular Ribbed and Frankfurter back to the Art Nouveau and implies that the psychedelic revivification of these sinuous, 'feminine' lines characterised 'graphic graphics' during the 1970s, a high point for popular smut. Seventies Lovelies were subtitled with pithy descriptions of their mood or situation – 'So Lonely', 'Intrigued' or 'In the Woods'. They were regularly posed for full-length portraits in real life settings, barely 'decent' versions of the images submitted to Readers' Wives slots in down-market, soft-core British magazines like *Fiesta*, *Escort* and *Razzle*.

From 1977, a discernable professionalism allied them visually to the more palatable world of Page 3 style 'glamour'. Poses were standardised, airbrushed studio head-and-shoulder shots in full maquillage; necklines plunged but clothing was securely worn, monochromatic. Subtitles were removed and the names of Erica, June, Michelle et al were given titular prominence in the ubiquitous ITC Bookman Swash, a font with legible, feminine flourish. In part, the professionalisation of the Lovely was a response to Tennent's ambition to develop export markets and sanitise their image for the USA. Additionally, as Schofield and Kamm point out, the success of the Lovelies had led them into roles as brand ambassadors, promo girls who could be called upon to launch events and competitions, or perform meet and greets at football clubs or pool lounges. The Lovelies trod the affective boundary between personal and corporate, self-assuredly communicating a 'Look, Don't Touch' policy.

As with National's *Fly Me* campaign, the isolation of the Lovelies' given names – Sandra, Norma, Lorraine – from their surnames – Franchetti, Murray, Davidson – invites an immediate, intimate relationship with the coy, provocative woman who smiles at you from the back of a can of lager. Liz, Karen, Lindsay fulfill a type; the gorgeous girl-next-door, friendly, unthreatening – she's the best that you can get. In 1970, Delta promoted the superior 'all-pro' skills of its staff and afforded its representative stewardess her full name but not her singularity: 'Delta is an airline run by professionals. Like Kris Conrad, stewardess. Pretty, resourceful, alert, efficient, confident and sociable. Chosen from 25 applicants. You'll have a nice trip because we have 2,300 Kris Conrads!'

1. Krasner, J. (2009) 'One of a long row only: Sexual Selection and the Male Gaze in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*' in Larson, B. & Brauer, F. *The Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms and Visual Culture* Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, pp.155-172
2. Barry, K. (2007) *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* Durham: Duke University Press
3. Clive Musket (www.uniformfreak.com) interviewed by Lisa Hix: 'Paper Dresses and Psychedelic Catsuits: When Airline Fashion Was Flying High', *Collectors Weekly*, August 27th 2014 www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/when-airline-fashion-was-flying-high (accessed 9th June 2015).
4. Jill Fields quoted in Barry (2007), p6
5. Schofield, C. & Kamm, A. (1984) *Lager Lovelies: The Story Behind The Glamour* Glasgow: Richard Drew
6. Frere-Jones, T. (2000) 'Drugstore Travelogue' in Heller, S. *Sex Appeal: The Art of Allure in Graphic and Advertising Design* New York: Allworth Press, pp.40-42

THE PERSISTENCE OF TYPE

KODAK

KODAK Color Control Patches

Sky
t's li

Calc

CAN

cat
pv

e."

nger
being

onit

h
ra

RT

vau
to
OK

can

